



**USAID | MACEDONIA**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Internet Technology Seen as Playing Important Role in Parliamentary Elections

#### U.S. expert advises political parties on use of internet for outreach and campaigning

Advice on political website design and internet campaigning has been provided to major political parties in Macedonia through the auspices of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID is part of the U.S. mission to Macedonia. The consultations were designed to prepare political parties to make better use of internet-based communication strategies during the 2006 parliamentary election campaign.

Mike Connell, who is a volunteer affiliated with the International Republican Institute (IRI), provided strategic campaign consultations for major governing and opposition parties on March 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Skopje.

"Macedonian political parties are well-positioned to increase their voter outreach efforts using the internet and are more advanced in adopting web based political applications than I have discovered in other countries in the region," said Connell. He engaged party leaders in campaign consultations, reviewed party webpage and e-democracy capabilities, and made recommendations to party communication directors and webmasters on how to benefit from the latest internet campaigning technologies to maximize voter outreach and "get out the vote" activities.

Connell, the founder and head of New Media Communications, is a leader in the internet strategy and communications field. He specializes in putting the latest technology to work for political clients. Connell has carried out innovative work in online campaigning, in the U.S. and other countries.

Commenting on his work in Macedonia, Connell said, "I am convinced that with the advent of Macedonia's innovative wireless network, on-line campaigning will become an increasingly important tool for political institutions."

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested more than \$450 million in Macedonia since 1993. More than 20 projects worth \$30 million a year are currently being implemented. These projects are designed to support Macedonia's transition to a free market-based, multi-ethnic democracy. They include initiatives to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a modern economy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

IRI has been active in Macedonia since 1990, and is best known in the country for its work with political parties on public opinion research and analysis: successfully encouraging the parties to utilize opinion research as an integral part of their overall campaign and voter-outreach efforts.